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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 10 May 1976, at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. AMERASINGHE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.25 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 3468 (XXX)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to General Assembly resolution 3468 (XXX) relating to the continuation of the consultations entered into by the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean in preparation for the proposed conference on the Indian Ocean, and his letter of 10 February 1976 to the members of the Committee (POL/G/102) requesting them to submit the views of their Governments on the six points set forth in that resolution as well as any other points they might wish to raise. He wished to inform the Committee of the replies which he had received with respect to those six points. Iran had stated that its views had already been communicated to the Committee. Burma had stated that its views would be communicated to the Committee as soon as its delegation received instructions from its Government. Kenya had already stated its views in its note of 29 May 1975 and had nothing to add. Bhutan indicated that its views would be circulated to the members of the Committee.

2. He suggested that China and Japan should be invited, as in the past, to participate in the consultations. If there were no objections he would take it that the Committee agreed to invite China and Japan to participate.

3. It was so decided.

4. Mr. OXLEY (Australia) said that his Government's reply to the Chairman's letter had been dispatched. That reply welcomed the continuation of consultations with other Indian Ocean littoral and hinterland States and expressed the view that the shared objective of reduced tension and greater security within the region could be achieved only if the agreement and co-operation of the great Powers and major maritime users, as well as that of the littoral and hinterland States, was assured. It also stated the view that it would be counterproductive to proceed with the conference before a basis for agreement had been firmly established through preliminary consultations and expressed the hope that the Committee would continue to concentrate its efforts on formulating realistic proposals as a basis for agreement.

5. Mr. MULYE (India) said that his delegation had not replied to the Chairman's letter because it had already submitted an adequate reply the year before and its views remained unchanged. It would make additional suggestions at a later date.

6. His delegation favoured the inclusion of China and Japan in the consultations. It also felt that the participation of the great Powers and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean was important and regretted that many had failed to respond to the invitation to them to participate. He suggested, therefore, that the invitation should be renewed in the hope that they might have changed their minds.

7. The CHAIRMAN noted that he had solicited the members's observations on the six points set forth in General Assembly resolution 3468 (XXX) only in order to record any changes in their views. The invitation to the great Powers to participate in consultations was a standing and open one and he regretted their lack of response.

8. Mr. MIRZA (Pakistan) said that the views of his delegation had already been submitted the year before and remained unchanged. His delegation hoped that the conference could be held in 1977.

9. It was obvious that the General Assembly, in resolution 3468 (XXX), had wished the Committee to act as a preparatory committee for the conference. It should therefore discuss the six points one by one before the thirty-first session of the General Assembly so as to formulate acceptable recommendations to submit to it. It should explore defined areas of agreement before convening the conference and try to have some kind of draft in advance. He wished to emphasize, however, that the convening of a conference should not be made conditional upon reaching prior agreement. The conference itself was the proper forum for preparing treaties and the like but the Committee should proceed to formulate recommendations before then.

10. The CHAIRMAN agreed that consultations had to be held among the hinterland States before the conference was convened and that convening the conference should not be made conditional upon prior agreement.

11. Mr. VANDERGERT (Sri Lanka) said that his delegation welcomed the decision to admit China and Japan as participants in the consultations. With respect to the Chairman's letter, his delegation's views had already been made known the year before and it would update them as necessary. He also wished to emphasize the importance of an exchange of ideas before the procedures for the forthcoming conference could be formalized.

12. Mr. RASOLONDRAIBE (Madagascar) said that his delegation had not replied to the Chairman's letter because it had already replied the year before. It would welcome the participation of China and Japan in the informal consultations of the littoral and hinterland countries of the region and felt that those consultations could be very useful. It hoped that the Committee would obtain the co-operation of those Powers which had previously refused such co-operation and felt that more specific formulation of the Committee's ideas in the form of a draft might be helpful in that regard.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had to decide on the possibility of formulating a draft agreement in informal consultations. It could not allow the great Powers to veto its decisions by withholding their participation.

14. Mr. OSHIMA (Japan) welcomed the invitation extended to his country to participate in the consultations and indicated that it would do so.

15. The CHAIRMAN said that if there were no objections he would take it that the Committee accepted the Indian proposal to inform the great Powers of the forthcoming consultations and renew the invitation for them to participate.

16. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.